

From the descriptions of the journey left by Fathers Francisco Antanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante, the group is believed to have traveled along the Strawberry, through Diamond Fork into Spanish Fork Canyon and then to the shores of Utah Lake.

Between this visit in the summer of 1776 and the beginnings of settlements in 1858 only hunters and trappers frequented the area in search of beaver and mink. Often they followed the trails and footpaths worn into the earth by Indians.

The settlers who moved into Wasatch County and claimed its land were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Their settlements near the Great Salt Lake, as well as subsequent colonizing efforts in outlying areas, were not chance events.

Persecution and misunderstanding had forced members of the Church to leave their homes and community life in Nauvoo, Ill., the place which the saints called their "City Beautiful." Through the vision and leadership of President Brigham Young, the pioneering members of the Church trudged thousands of weary miles from Illinois, across the plains states, and into the Rocky Mountains. The first company entered the Salt Lake valley on July 24, 1847.

In the mountain country, which they named the Territory of Deseret, the industrious pioneers turned water onto the parched, desert soil and fruitful fields resulted. Timber and stone were taken from the surrounding hills to erect homes and church buildings. An active commerce grew up that made the area the literal crossroads of the west.

As the central settlement of Salt Lake City became established, President Young encouraged the saints to colonize the outlying areas of the Territory. The new settlements strengthened the territory, broadened the influence of the Church and opened up new farmlands for the thousands of Saints who were arriving in the area each month.

During the first decade of colonizing, President Young called settlers to move into southern and northern parts of the territory. Major settlements were established in St. George in the south, Manti and Provo in the central area and Logan and Cache Valley in the north.

In the Provo area, settlers began moving in about 1849. The city grew until about 1857 when some of the townspeople felt that all the choice land had been claimed. Newly arrived settlers began looking toward "greener pastures" on the other side of the Wasatch Mountains.

One summer Sunday morning in 1857 a group of workmen at a sawmill in Big Cottonwood Canyon, southeast of the Salt Lake Valley, decided to spend the day looking at the rumored "paradise land" nestled in the tops of the Wasatch range. The men, Charles N. Carroll, George Jacques, James Adams and others, hiked to the summit of the range and brought back glowing reports of a desirable agricultural valley.

Rumors still existed that there was frost in the valley during every month of the year. However, the favorable reports of the sawmill workers, and others, made many people anxious to settle in the area. Thus

Chas Negus  
Canwell

1st settler p 4

Home on NE  
corner of North  
School grounds

George Canwell  
peace Treaty  
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it was that during the Spring of 1858 a group of cattlemen in Provo drove a herd of stock through the canyon and established some ranches at the south end of the valley. Those in the group included William Wall, George W. Dean, Aaron Daniels and a few others. With an eye toward keeping their cattle in the valley during the winter these men harvested a large crop of meadow hay.

During the Spring and Summer of 1858 a number of persons explored the area and decided it would be a satisfactory place to settle.

The first steps toward settlement came in July, 1858, when a party headed by J. W. Snow, county surveyor in Provo, went to the valley and laid out a section of ground just north of the present site of Heber City. Twenty-acre tracts were surveyed and each man in the party selected his farm.

Having decided to settle in the valley, the men turned their attention to the feasibility of constructing a road through Provo Canyon. As early as 1852, an explorer, William Gardner, had recommended that such a road be constructed. Then in 1855 the Territorial Legislature enacted a measure empowering Aaron Johnson, Thomas S. Williams, Evan M. Green and William Wall to construct a road from the mouth of Provo Canyon in Utah County to the Kamas prairie. From there it was to travel northeasterly on the most feasible route until it intercepted the main traveled road from the United States to Great Salt Lake, near Black Fork in Green River county.

Unfortunately, this road was never begun. Misunderstandings with federal officials resulted in the appointment of Alfred Cumming as the territorial governor in 1857. He was escorted into the Utah territory by federal troops commanded by Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston. The presence of federal troops gave the Mormon people more to think about than building the road.

By mid-1858, however, the troops were peacefully garrisoned at Camp Floyd near Utah Lake and the Mormon people had returned to normal living.

With cattle grazing on the Wasatch lands, and with ranch sites already surveyed, the need for a road again became an issue of primary importance. To win support for the project, a group of Provo men took the matter to President Brigham Young and explained both the hardships and the advantages of building such a road. The Church President favored the project and called a meeting in the bowery at Provo on June 6, 1858. He said at that time:

"A road up Provo Kanyon is much needed, and we want ten or twenty companies of laborers to go on it forthwith in order to finish it in about fifteen days so that you can go into the valleys of the Weber where there is plenty of timber.

"I understand that a company has been chartered by the legislative assembly to make that road. If those men will come forward we will take the responsibility of making it. We shall need about 500 laborers."